



Wichitans' Watch – CLEAR

AUG 19 2005

Received

Wichitans' Watch is a free public service, total volunteer effort, to increase awareness of local government and to promote improvements through citizen participation.

August 16, 2005

Pg. 1 of 19

2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

(703) 699-2950

Re: Sheppard Air Force Base, Wichita Falls, TX - citizen feedback BRAC
Commission Hearings – San Antonio, TX

Dear BRAC COMMISSION:

Information equals strategic logistics in modern network centric warfare. Information is a primary instrument of national power. Properly used, it is the essence of victory. Abused, is equivalent to aiding the enemy.

- 1) Local officials and media pundits hired a retired general to prepare the local BRAC report, but failed to disclose or attribute credit to the general in its report. Presenters to the BRAC refused to disclose how much the general was paid in a news report.
- 2) Pro-Sheppard citizens find the Pentagon's original findings for Sheppard to be valid—or at least, no new reliable data has been presented to reverse.
- 3) City government and local media are hostile against you. Wichita Falls self-appointed presenters to BRAC are damaging to Sheppard AFB, DOD, & military.
- 4) Media presenters to BRAC mislead and misinform citizens regarding local and nation security issues.
- 5) Presenter to BRAC, Darrell Coleman, is the publisher of the local newspaper. The Times Record News is using its platform, to mislead citizens through agenda-setting, claiming the DOD/government made errors on its calculations for Sheppard Base Realignment and others, and by claiming savings that are not substantiated.

6) Sheppard is neglected by city officials and city residents resulting in disengagement in civic affairs vital to Sheppard's well-being.

Recommendations:

- 1) Support Pentagon/BRAC's findings contrary to unreliable, questionable or unsupported local media presenter's "new" data.
- 2) Recommend that the public affairs office at Sheppard AFB cease using Times Record News to print the base paper to eliminate continuous sabotage military efforts in Wichita Falls.
- 3) Consider Mr. Coleman's politicization of the BRAC process and his local newspaper's anti-Bush, anti-war, anti-military propaganda and its impact on Sheppard airmen/families and on national security.
- 4) Consider local negative attitudes and behaviors of residents of Wichita Falls on Sheppard airmen/families and national security.
- 5) Consider disdainful attitude and neglect of Sheppard by city officials.
- 6) Acknowledge a retired general prepared the Wichita Falls BRAC report—but, question why the local presenters gave no attribution to the general in their report.
- 7) Acknowledge that a comprehensive cost-analysis and study could not possibly have been completed in the time in which the report was prepared—2 weeks.
- 8) BRAC should adhere to Pentagon's original recommendations for realignment of Sheppard.

History/discussion: On June 21, 2005, council passed resolution 94-2005 to amend the city's Economic Development Corporation's budget for the documented purpose to pay General John Phillips (former (?) undersecretary of defense logistics) \$ 30,000 for "consulting services fees." City Manager, Darron Leiker, during the council session, said Gen. Phillips was hired to prepare a case *against* base realignment in which the Pentagon recommended that Sheppard AFB would lose/move some 1,600 to 2,600 jobs (medical and F-35 training divisions). Open record request reveal the contract signed by General Phillips was for \$28,000 plus travel costs.

Simultaneously, in shock at the Pentagon's decision to make job cuts at Sheppard, The Times Record News (TRN-local press) and affiliates- the Board of Commerce and Industry (BCI) launched a damage control "We Support Sheppard" campaign. A few weeks later, this same group busied themselves (using local tax dollars) as self-appointed local special interests to the BRAC Commission hearings in San Antonio.

General Phillips was not mentioned again nor how the \$30,000 (\$50,000 total combined with 2 other cities) was actually spent. Rather, the Times Record News' article boasted that BCI "delegate" Darrell Coleman presented a "unique" 20 minute presentation to your BRAC commission to attempt to alter the Pentagon's recommendations for realignment of Sheppard's personnel.

Sirs—Darrell Coleman does not represent the citizens of Wichita Falls.

Mr. Coleman is publisher of the local paper -- The Times Record News (TRN). Mr. Coleman and his editor, Carroll Wilson, and Assistant Managing Editor Deanna Watson's near media monopoly are problematic for the citizens of the city and should be for BRAC, as well. Mr. Coleman/Wilson's anti-American, anti-War, anti-Bush, anti-conservative, anti-Pentagon/BRAC, liberal biased newspaper does more to harm the mission of DOD and Sheppard's (airmen, civilian personnel, and their families) than any other negative factor in Wichita Falls (see below TRN's editors or "editorial boards" opinion pieces, which are routine from Mr. Coleman's press). Being the only printing press in town—Coleman *prints* the Sheppard Senator newspaper, as well.

Media is entitled to publish its "news" and opinions—however, with freedom of speech, or the press, comes responsibility and accountability. And, certainly, the BRAC Commission is entitled to know about Mr. Coleman/Wilson agenda-setting and biased negative statements regarding Sheppard/DOD, military and the current Washington administration which they regularly print and broadcast on radio, as well. Logically, one must then ask— why were they making a pitch to keep Sheppard jobs here—when any given day of the week, these folks are openly anti-military?

Furthermore, historically, many residents, in and around Wichita Falls, are hostile to the airmen (and incoming civilian personnel) for reasons that have never been clear to "outsiders" (see letters to editor below—essentially, labeling the military "dogs"). In part, Wichita Falls is barely past Post-Reconstruction era--"Yankees" and blacks are particularly targeted.

Historically, too, the city administration and the Board of Commerce and Industry neglect Sheppard (as does the BCI's Military Affairs Committee—made up of self-appointed or crony philanthropy wannabees—while veteran appointees are virtually non-existent). Sheppard's city council representative, Charles Elmore's, recall election is set for September 10, 2005 for "failing to represent" the citizens. This is illustrated if one examines the extremely low voter turn out from Sheppard district—which is longstanding. Former mayor, Bill Altman was recalled by citizens in Feb. 2005, as well—for grounds given "creating a hostile work place." In an historic event, a Sheppard reserve pilot ran for local mayor this May 05, to attempt to fulfill Altman's remaining year, and just a few hundred from Sheppard's district turned out to vote (out of 9,000 registered voters in Sheppard's district). The pilot lost. To illustrate further—why did our mayor or city council not present information to you? Did they even attend the hearings? Did you hear from any of these local officials (or BCI or their Military Affairs Committee or TRN) when the F-35 planning began 2 years ago? Sheppard is

disengaged from the public arena—because city officials, these media moguls, and many “locals” show utter contempt and disregard for Sheppard’s very presence in Wichita Falls. The officials at the base may not fully be aware of these dynamics—they may tolerate local politics as best as they can while here, and then they simply move on to their next assignment.

In addition, media pundits provide misleading press on local and national security issues, as you see below, another Wichitan writes objecting to Coleman/Wilson’s spin against the Patriot Act: “We, the American people, truly want an honest and open debate of the real issues pertinent to our security” the citizen writes. On another local security matter, Mr. Coleman/Wilson of the Times Record News recently threatened to sue the city of Wichita Falls because city council and the police department wisely went to secure voice transmission with a new radio system to block criminal (or terrorist) interceptions of police communications (UCR violent crimes up 10%—murders, gangs, drugs are rampant). Coleman’s press repeatedly (and Wilson on am radio) misled the public and withheld facts from the citizens of Wichita Falls regarding legalities and need for secure voice—while calling the local administration a “police state.” As a Master’s degreed individual with specialty training in emergency management, I can attest that the need for secure voice is absolute with local crime and threatening terrorists’ acts and critical infrastructure of Sheppard being a NATO training base and the largest in the nation—housed here. Lanham Lyne, new mayor, recently took office and forced the city manager and police chief to then provide pre-programmed radios to Coleman’s newspaper—Lyne ingored the city’s pending appeal to the State Attorney General- to stay secure. Lyne’s campaign promise was to do away with secure voice—and Coleman’s TRN openly endorsed Lyne for mayor. Since, the state law says that media does not get special treatment or access to, regarding what may be deemed public information, our new million dollar police communication system’s security is breached. Now any person (including criminals and terrorists) are entitled to radio access, as well. Greed for power, money and a back-door deal run the political machine--small town Texas politics and cronyism dictate irrational and unethical (if not at times, outright illegal) public policy in the city—which places citizens and infrastructures at risk.

In summary, for the BRAC presentation, a thorough assessment and recommendation (to include cost analysis) from General Phillips (or anyone) could not have been done in 2 weeks time—beginning June 21—when city council voted to retain him with \$30,000 for “consulting services fees.” The report to the BRAC Commission was obtained and reviewed by Sheppard personnel. The report gave no attribution to General Phillips whatsoever, but rather only thanked congressional reps. for their contributions. One reviewer from Sheppard opined “If this report were presented to the commander at Sheppard—the preparer would have been fired.” The 40 % cost savings boasted by these media presenters is completely unsubstantiated. The presenters claim keeping Phase I medical training at Sheppard will save 40% but, they omit millions of dollars required for student transfer costs incurred to move all trainees on to Phase II (not here and which requires a hospital in which to train-which this area does not have, but San Antonio does). Coleman is publishing claimed cost savings in his

newspaper on a regular basis which are simply not substantiated. Coleman also runs articles/opinion pieces casting doubt on the Pentagon's figures altogether.

In addition, in a report of June 30, 2005 Tim Chase, head of the BCI, when asked, refused to say how much Gen. John Phillips had been paid. This falls under public information--what is Mr. Chase hiding? Another report reads, "For Wichita Falls, the BRAC push has been a \$50,000 (Burkburnett \$15,000. and Iowa Park \$5,000) effort, including a consultant and the bus trip. Lawmakers continue to hope more base-specific information gets released, but Chase said the presentation will go likely go without the data." In another report, the newspaper boasted that while other cities presented "power point with statistics"---the Wichita Falls entourage gave just a "common sense" presentation to BRAC. What supporting data did this group even present to you? How accurate was their data---if any were even presented in their 20 minutes allotted? How honest was any of their presentation? ---ref. the below---the adjoining city of Burkburnett ("supporting" Sheppard too)--even digitally altered photos were prepared for BRAC to make the supporting local crowds appear bigger.

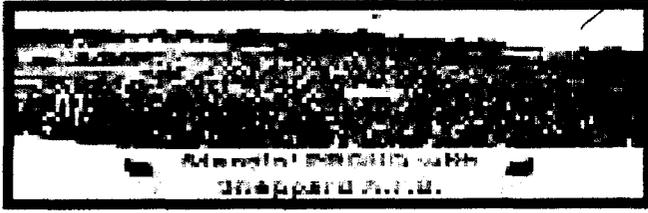
This group of presenters has politicized the BRAC process. Further, it is of no value to consider last-minute, half-baked or fraudulent, unsupported recommendations, and derailing hype of a few biased, disingenuous, grandstanding, special interests individuals whose bottom line is protecting their own liberal agenda, businesses (money and power base).

The share of Americans who believe that news organizations are "politically biased in their reporting" increased to 60 percent in 2005, up from 45 percent in 1985, according the Pew Research Center. Political bias is evident locally--the BRAC presenter, Mr. Coleman's anti-military, anti-war agenda-setting of the Times Record News is harmful to Sheppard's and DOD's mission. We do well to heed the cautions of freedom fighters like Lt. Col Robert Patterson, USAF, as his book "Reckless Disregard" details treasonous individuals who place personal political gain ahead of our troops' welfare. The BRAC Commission must look closely at the neglectful, reckless, disparaging and dangerous climate these same local individuals create and foster which harms Sheppard's officers/airmen/families, and then, go by the BRAC and Pentagon's recommendations for realignment, as it sees fit, to aid in the nation's defense mission.

Aside from the hostile, longstanding and ongoing, anti-military culture in the city - if realigning military installations enhances the mission and achieves DOD efficiency through the Pentagon's original recommendations, then communities, including Wichita Falls, must take their perceived local economic/monetary losses for the greater gain of America--especially, as terrorism rains down upon us and the world.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

SAFB support photo digitally altered



This photograph of people showing their support for Sheppard Air Force Base was taken at a Fourth of July celebration in Burkburnett and sent to the public information office at Sheppard Air Force Base. That office sent it to the Times Record News, and it appeared on Friday's Community page. Burkburnett City Manager Mike Slye said Friday he instructed the photographer to digitally alter the photograph to make it appear more people were present than actually attended. Slye said the touchups were ordered for the Base Realignment and Closure hearing Monday. "I never intended to deceive anybody," he said.

Letter to the Editor, July 14 (responding to airmen/family below on July 12).

To the airman bad-mouthing Wichita Falls this morning in a letter to the editor: I have a few questions (for) you. You stated you have been stationed there since 1987. How did that happen — a little paper shuffling?

I always thought a normal tour of duty was two years. If you didn't like Wichita Falls, why didn't you move on? I'm sure the chance was there. Nothing like going over to the war. Been there, done that. Now grow up.

Most all of the bases are treated like this. Try San Diego. No sailors or dogs allowed.

Truiett Yancey

Airman and family letters to the Editor, July 12

Sheppard's money

I love Sheppard - or, I love Sheppard's money?

With BRAC bearing down, it does not surprise me that Wichita Falls is getting worried now that there is a chance of losing people and money. But, more importantly, the money.

I have been at Sheppard since 1987, and nothing in the area surrounding the base has really changed. Other than retirees and other small businesses willing to put in the hard work and hours trying to run mom-and-pop businesses, there have been ZERO improvements around the base.

Oh wait, there is a bus stop to pick up airmen and take them downtown to spend their newfound money, new traffic signals, tattoo shops, and more "payday loan sharks" than you can shake a stick at. Other parts of town have gotten new restaurants and shopping malls, but nothing has been done to bolster business around the base.

Since I was first stationed here in 1987, a Whataburger has come and gone. A new Sonic is there and a couple of other small sit-down eateries have come in, (plus) a Super Wal-Mart. Some of them stayed and some left. There is a Burger King on base, but it has bankers' hours.

When is the BCI going to start encouraging one or two large chain restaurants and other businesses to move into the area around the base instead of Kell, where new restaurants are going up as we speak?

This city wants the economic impact that the base puts out, but is not willing to make life better a little closer to it. Give breaks to the ones that will have to pay for the way overpriced land outside the base, to encourage development there, so the old termite-infested GEICO building can be torn down and replaced by nice chain restaurant. Show us you truly love Sheppard and not just Sheppard's money.

Name Withheld

Sheppard

I couldn't physically get to Sheppard Air Force Base on the Fourth of July, but my heart and my thoughts were there. You see, I remember when Sheppard closed down in the late 1940's or the early '50's. As a teen I couldn't understand why the people in this town treated "soldiers" like trash. They didn't want to rent to them, serve them or date them.

There used to be a swimming pool across from where Midwestern University is now, and I met Sgt. John Reisinger. A year later I married him, and my Sunday school teacher "tsk, tsked."

It didn't take long for the empty stores, streets and apartments to sink in on these good people. It was great news when Sheppard was reopened. The people rejoiced and welcomed the "soldiers."

Sgt. Reisinger went to Newfoundland when the base closed. He had a stopover at Austin before coming back to Sheppard as a provost sergeant in the Air Police Office. He gave me three little girls who are now beautiful women. He was a master sergeant when he passed away 40 years ago.

Shirley Bittle
Wichita Falls

Armed Forces 8-2-05

While shopping at Wal-Mart one day last week, I overheard a group of people criticizing the men and women serving in our Armed Forces, and needless to say, I became very angry. But I held my tongue.

I proudly served this country for more than 23 years. I served in the wars of Korea and Vietnam, and my life was on the line protecting those people's freedoms.

In support of the men and women in our Armed Forces and our military retirees, I would like to educate those who criticize them, by making the following statements:

1. It is they, not the reporter, who have given us "freedom of the press."
2. It is they, not the poet, who have given us "freedom of speech."
3. It is they, not the politicians, who have given us the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."
4. It is they who salute the flag, and those whose coffins are draped with the flag.

To those who criticize and think the military way of life is a "piece of cake," I suggest they develop a backbone and enlist in a branch of our Armed Forces and help protect our way of life, which they so greatly enjoy.

Respectfully, Charles L. Chastain TSgt USAF (Ret.) Burkburnett

Neutral

The politics never stop. Being politically neutral, just like the TRN, Wichita Falls residents met with the BRAC Committee at San Antonio and later here in Wichita Falls on behalf of Sheppard Air Force Base. However, three editorials were written, as follows: 1) July 24, education bill; 2) July 25, watchdogs; 3) July 26, "In the right direction," about losing our civil rights.

Many citizens can't trust the media — how true. And the media acting as a Fourth Estate watchdog (is important). Almost everyone agrees that the local newspaper is important, until it becomes too partial to one political party.

The recent (renewal of) the Patriot Act, mostly intact with a few sunset provisions by both the House and Senate, answers the civil rights concerns. TRN's article (Aug. 3, page 4B, "Such a fuss"), about recess appointments conveniently forgot to mention the reported 143 recess appointments in President Clinton's administration,

I can't remember seeing a diatribe about that in the editorials. Your political skirts are showing, TRN. Since TRN likes to pull big words such as amorphous on us readers, how come you haven't told us that the definition of the word filibuster is from an old Dutch origin term meaning "pirate." Is that truth or fiction?

In my opinion, I wouldn't give the U.N. another taxpayer's dime until the so-called food-for-oil scam was resolved. It is still pretty obvious that the TRN is still in a Bush-bashing mode even after the excellent Sheppard support.

Roger H. Hutchison

Wichita Falls

The following articles/opinions are samples to illustrate the anti-administration, anti-military agenda setting that the presenter to BRAC-Darrell Coleman regularly publishes to 68,000 people daily in Wichita Falls, TX

TIMES RECORD NEWS - COLEMAN/WILSON/EDITORIAL BOARD ARTICLES

Our Opinions: Pullout essential

Announcing deadline for leaving Iraq unwise, but we must get out

June 18, 2005

Americans are getting increasingly antsy about our role in Iraq and what the future holds for that country.

And rightly so.

The killing goes on. **More American troops die each day. More Iraqis die each day.**

Yes, contractors using taxpayer money and some of our troops have done good things in Iraq. Yes, the Iraqis did have an election. But, they have no government, and the various factions trying to come together to form one hate each other's guts.

There just seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel.

Now, Americans are understanding that there were virtually no grounds for going to war in the first place. And their children are absolutely refusing to go fight voluntarily.

These are among the reasons that both Republicans and Democrats in Washington are beginning to call for the president to set a deadline for bringing our troops home.

The administration refuses to do so.

Frankly, while our editorial position has always been in opposition to the war, **we can say that the president is right on this issue.**

If a deadline is set, the killing might stop. But once the deadline is past, it will begin again with vengeance.

Like it or not, we're in Iraq. And, as in poker, we can't afford to show our hand.

News reports suggest that while the White House will not set a deadline, the president will now go on the offensive to try to justify our continuing presence in Iraq.

In other words, the spin machine will go into overdrive.

That's one issue. Another is the fact that setting a deadline is probably impossible.

Some military leaders in Iraq have told The Washington Post that it's unlikely a strong defense force made up of Iraqis will be put together even two years from now.

That having been said, we must get our troops out as soon as possible.

This has, in fact, turned into another Vietnam, so extraction will be painful and we will lose face with some in the world.

But American lives, which should not have been risked on this venture in the first place, **will be saved.**

Our Opinions: Threat to freedom June 17, 2005 – Coleman/Wilson

Flaws in Patriot Act now under scrutiny from some legislators

June 17, 2005

Federal legislators are apparently actually giving a critical eye to the Patriot Act.

The House voted on Wednesday to cut from the law the provision that allows law-enforcement agents to find out what citizens have been reading or checking out of public libraries.

The great fear going into the act as its sunset provisions require was that the House and Senate would simply rubber-stamp what the president and his cabinet already have and want to add.

The Senate has not taken up the act.

From the perspective of those who value the freedoms afforded to citizens by our Constitution, the act simply must be given a thorough going-over from start to finish.

It was designed to keep terrorists from entering the United States and causing the kind of havoc that occurred on 9-11.

Has it done so?

How do we know?

Has it done so at the expense of traditional American rights?

Most assuredly.

There are many examples.

National Public Radio reported on Thursday, for example, that photographers who happened to be taking pictures of bridges and federal buildings have been arrested and detained, and their film has been confiscated, all in the name of Patriot Act security, and yet the Patriot Act does not even have a provision that makes taking photos illegal. So the act has a rippling effect of repression.

The Patriot Act has watered down or virtually eliminated at least eight amendments to the Constitution, amendments that outline rights that cannot be taken away from citizens by government.

Peaceful dissent, guaranteed in the First Amendment, is threatened in the act.

Without search warrants, police and federal officers can enter homes under the guise of searching for terrorist materials.

In some instances, the police can arrest people, take them before secret courts and have them sentenced without anyone knowing their whereabouts.

All of these provisions, not just the one on spying on citizens via libraries, should scare Americans into insisting on cutting back on the power of government to clamp down and terrorize its own citizens.

Wichita Falls Citizen responds to Coleman/Wilson's opinion piece above:

Patriot Act - Letter to Editor June 22

The TRN editorial of June 17 missed on its analysis of the Patriot Act debate. The focus on background noise failed to hit the real issues.

The TRN conclusion, that the recent Congressional debate of the Patriot Act represents a "thorough going over" for those who value freedom, reflects how little they understand what they saw. The recent posturing by our Congressional representatives is actually much ado about changing nothing.

The real story is that changing one set of judges for another lacks substance. The Congressional posturing does, however, make for great sound bites.

How absurd is the editorial board's statement that they do not know if the Patriot Act has worked since 9-11?

Hello! Connect the dots.

Prior to 9-11, U.S. property around the world was attacked by terrorists with alarming regularity before culminating with the destruction of the Twin Towers. Since the act's passage — nada!

The referenced National Public Radio story on photographers detained under the "Patriot Act" is most remarkable for the single item left out. Both the police and photographers agreed there was nothing specifically in the Patriot Act that led to the action by the police. Their conclusion: 9-11 is the real cause of the police action, not the Patriot Act.

There are the daily claims about freedoms lost (The New York Times, Washington Post, the ACLU, and now the TRN to name just a few). To date, no one can point to a single person who has lost their rights under the "Patriot Act."

We, the American people, truly want an honest and open debate of the real issues pertinent to our security. Opinions need to be heard, weighed, thought through and discussed openly. Supporting facts must truly be facts. Dubious media claims about lost freedoms, during the course of the debate, only muddy the waters.

Don't sully the debate with speculation on freedoms not lost.

Robert Baggott, Wichita Falls

Letters to the Editor, August 3

Rise up

Now is the time that we as citizens of the U.S.A. need to stand up for the rights we are guaranteed. It is time to unite and go to Washington and remove the whole Bush conspiracy.

Every one of them is a draft dodger. Lying to citizens about the reasons to go to war is high treason. We need to no longer stand by and let lies continue.

The real terrorists are the leaders who have taken us to war. RISE UP AND TAKE CONTROL.

Darrell J. Walker

Wichita Falls

TIMES RECORD NEWS ATTEMPTS TO CAST DOUBT ON PENTAGON OR DOD NUMBERS IN ITS DECISION

Our Opinions: Memorable

BRAC commissioners received visionary presentation from city

July 13, 2005

Commissioners considering which bases to close and which bases to cut heard what was probably the most creative presentation of the day during their three-state hearing in San Antonio on Monday.

And it came from Wichita Falls Area Military Affairs Committee.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission heard from communities all across Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas that will be affected by what the commissioners recommend to the president and to Congress in September.

Some towns openly expressed anger, particularly Houston, which probably has the least to lose of any city in the country. Their presentation had to be window-dressing for constituents.

Some expressed desperation, particularly *Texarkana, a city that will be devastated if the commission follows the recommendations of the Department of Defense. That city would lose all of its military installations.*

But, Wichita Falls' team took an imaginative and visionary approach, focusing on what ought to be done in the future to create truly effective and efficient and cost-saving programs.

This focus on the future must have been an attention-grabber for the BRAC commissioners.

While every other community presented Power Point slides heavy with statistics, Wichita Falls' team of Kay Yeager and Darrell Coleman simply pointed out the logic of bringing several new training programs to Sheppard, which is the largest training facility in the Air Force right now. It's also the one its customers rank at the very top.

The delegates proposed consolidating initial training for medical personnel at Sheppard, where there is plenty of space. That training is in the classroom and in labs and has nothing to do with working on actual patients. This is the training that DoD proposes to move to San Antonio. The DoD approach makes no sense when all services could consolidate training for the initial phase of exposure to the medical field at Sheppard.

The Joint Strike Fighter figured into a couple of other recommendations. One was that JSF maintenance training be done at Sheppard, which already is preparing to train maintainers of the Raptor. The other

proposal was that undergraduate pilot training for the JSF be conducted at Sheppard. This just makes common sense, too, when you consider that Sheppard has been training pilots from throughout the world for 30 years.

And finally, the most visionary proposal was for all maintenance training for the Unmanned Aerial Vehicles that are being used more and more as the Air Force fulfills its missions to be consolidated at SAFB. Right now UAV training is spread across the country in 14 places. That makes no sense at all.

Since none of these proposals were included in the original DoD list of realignments, the BRAC commission will have to add them to whatever final recommendations are made to Congress.

We urge the commissioners to do so.

Besides making sense, all of these proposals will actually save the Air Force money.

(Disclaimer: Darrell Coleman is publisher of the Times Record News.)

On a mission to make it happen

Leaders make case for SAFB in San Antonio

**By Carroll Wilson/Times Record News
July 12, 2005**

SAN ANTONIO - Wichita Falls launched a unique and visionary offensive here Monday, urging base closing commissioners to add training programs at Sheppard Air Force Base rather than cutting.

The approach taken by the Board of Commerce & Industry was not data-driven and not primarily based on Department of Defense recommended cuts of about 1,600 jobs at SAFB. Other cities took defensive stands, heavily loaded down with statistics.

Wichita Falls' speakers made a case that Sheppard, the city's largest employer, keep a medical training program slated for movement to San Antonio - and expand it.

In addition, the BCI's delegates, Kay Yeager and Darrell Coleman, outlined how Sheppard's first-class reputation as a training installation points to giving the base other missions in the future.

The two city representatives had only 20 minutes to make their case. And at the end of their remarks, a crowd of about 450 Wichita Falls area residents, clad in blue T-shirts, stood, whistled and cheered. Most of them had taken buses to San Antonio that left Wichita Falls at 3 a.m. Monday.

Yeager began her part of the presentation noting that Sheppard is the largest training base in the Air Force. She said it is also the most respected.

Likewise, she told commissioners the military has spent more than \$450 million since 1989 to completely revamp the base. The latest addition will be a maintenance program for the Raptor.

Then, she and Coleman laid out the BCI's base committee's proposals.

- First: The Phase I medical training programs for all services should be located at Sheppard. The DoD has recommended moving that specific program and the jobs it has created to San Antonio. The DoD suggestion is to consolidate all medical training there.

But, Yeager said there is an alternative that makes more sense and would save the military 40 percent of what it would cost to relocate programs. That's because of the way Phase I training is conducted.

"... One hundred percent of Phase I medical training for all services is currently conducted in the classroom using very sophisticated virtual training aids and mockups," she said. "No services allow students attending their initial training to interact with patients or laboratories located in a clinical setting."

And Sheppard has plenty of classroom space to handle any additional student load, she said.

- Second: Yeager's committee recommended that DoD locate initial air crew and ground crew training for the Joint Strike Fighter, yet to be approved, at Sheppard.

- Third: The group recommended that all Joint Strike Fighter undergraduate training be performed at Sheppard. This mission would dovetail with the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training Program that's been conducted at the base for 30 years.

Sheppard has plenty of space and excess capacity to handle the training, she said.

- Fourth: Advocates recommended Sheppard as a site for maintenance of an Unmanned Aerial Vehicles training program. UAVs are being increasingly deployed in Iraq and in other areas, and there is no such centralized program, Coleman said.

Already, he said, Sheppard's participation in part of the UAV development program has saved the taxpayers \$3 million.

Wichita Falls' proposals were just that. The BRAC commissioners were asked to recommend the SAFB mission additions to Congress when they make their final report in September.

Joining Yeager and Coleman in making remarks were U.S. Sen. John Cornyn and U.S. Rep. Mac Thornberry.

Wichita Falls' contingent was not the largest at the hearings. More than 1,000 people traveled to San Antonio from Texarkana, where the military presence will be wiped out if BRAC recommendations are carried out.

Old numbers a factor in equation

Military Affairs Committee presents case for Sheppard

**By Michael Hines/Times Record News
August 6, 2005**

Outdated or outmoded data seem to be at the heart of proposed personnel changes at Sheppard Air Force Base. Local leaders hope that by pointing out the miscalculations they can help the base avoid the alterations.

Three days after a retired general toured Sheppard Air Force Base, members of the local Military Affairs Committee went to Washington, D.C., to present more reasons why proposed changes aren't needed.

BCI President Tim Chase said the strength of the arguments came from the use of the Department of Defense's own data.

BRAC recommendations originally slated Sheppard to lose about 2,600 personnel directly. That would cause a total job loss of 4,400 workers and possibly an economic hit ranging from \$80 million to \$120 million.

"That loss is the equivalent of the number of jobs gained in the past 10 years," said Kay Yeager, MAC chairwoman.

The issue also shows up in construction costs. Fort Sam Houston would need to spend more than \$226,000 in military construction to handle the added mission. If the medical training came to Sheppard, nearly \$123,000 worth of construction would be needed.

The data seemed to resonate, said Darrell Coleman, Times Record News publisher and MAC vice chairman.

"The fact that we were having dialogue and they were asking us questions means we've reached them," he said. "Lights have gone off."

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Numbers don't add up

Officials say Texas would lose, not gain, jobs

**By Suzanne Gamboa/The Associated Press
July 11, 2005**

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon says it can save money and improve the armed forces by closing four Texas military bases and winnowing others, but state and community leaders say the Department of Defense is wrong.

Texas would gain 6,150 military and civilian jobs under the department's plan to close and realign 180 military bases nationwide, according to the Pentagon. Only two other states rank higher — Maryland with 9,293 job gains, and Georgia with 7,423, based on Pentagon estimates.

But after scrutinizing the proposal, some state officials say the plan actually would cost Texas at least 3,000 military jobs and scores more in civilian jobs. They will get a chance to argue that discrepancy, and other reasons the state's bases should be spared, during a hearing before the federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission today in San Antonio.

Showing Pentagon errors in job loss calculations may be the best chance to remove bases from the closure list before the BRAC Commission makes its recommendations to President Bush this fall, said Chris Hellman, a military policy analyst for the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, a Washington think-tank that focuses on peace and security issues, including defense spending.

Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Clarendon, said the decision to move a medical training program from Sheppard Air Force Base to Fort Sam Houston was more of a medical recommendation than a proposal to make the best use of the base's facilities.

He also said no data is available to explain the Pentagon's proposal to move Joint Strike Fighter mechanics from Sheppard to Florida, costing an estimated 487 jobs in Wichita Falls under Pentagon estimates.

Killeen leaders say a major problem for them stems from the government counting 5,000 troops assigned last year to Fort Hood, the state's largest Army post, as temporary soldiers when locals considered them permanent.

The Pentagon proposes moving the soldiers to Fort Carson, Colo., and contends Fort Hood will nearly break even in the BRAC realignment.

"Fort Hood loses more troops under the BRAC recommendation than any other installation in Texas," said U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards of Waco, the ranking Democrat of a House Appropriations Subcommittee overseeing military construction and quality of life funding.

Other issues Texas officials plan to raise at today's hearing:

- Supporters of Naval Station Ingleside near Corpus Christi in southeast Texas argue that closing the base, along with one in Mississippi, would create a security problem because there would be no Navy ships in the Gulf of Mexico providing security.
- Texarkana officials say the Defense Department miscalculated the job losses by listing employment as 2,500 at the Red River Army Depot and only 150 at the ammunition plant next door. Locals contend 2,600 civilians and 600 contractors work at the depot, and 440 people work at the plant.
- The School of Aerospace Medicine at Brooks City Base is scheduled to be transferred to Wright Patterson Air Force Base, near Dayton, Ohio. The office of Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-San Antonio, said keeping the school in San Antonio would make sense because the Air Force is creating a military medical center at nearby Fort Sam Houston.
- Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio will lose more than 800 jobs, including contractors, under a Defense Department proposal to relocate the Cryptologic Systems Group, an intelligence unit, to other states.

Thornberry vows to fight changes

**By Michael Hines/Times Record News
August 12, 2005**

Mac Thornberry still doesn't know how he'd vote on proposed personnel changes at Sheppard Air Force Base, but he is sure about one thing: he won't stop fighting those changes from occurring.

The U.S. representative held a news conference Thursday afternoon to discuss the upcoming timetable for the Base Realignment and Closure process. He highlighted upcoming key dates, including the commission's final deliberations held publicly the week of Aug. 22. After voting on each military installation, the commission will send a revised list to the president Sept. 8. On Sept. 23, the president is expected to approve or disapprove those recommendations, and that decision would head to Congress for approval or rejection.

But what would he vote when that recommendation comes before Congress?

"Sheppard and other communities have pointed out discrepancies" in BRAC recommendations, he said. "I need to see what the BRAC community thinks about those."

Still, efforts to avert personnel changes were continuing even on the day of the news conference, Thornberry said.

"We've had continued contact ... trying to clarify some of the underlying assumptions that" BRAC used, he said.

BRAC recommendations originally slated Sheppard to lose about 2,600 personnel directly. That would cause a total job loss of 4,400 workers and possibly an economic hit ranging from \$80 million to \$120 million.

Local efforts to counter the changes have been really been impressive, Thornberry said.

"The community has come together in an amazing way," he said.

In particular, members of the Military Affairs Committee have been able to open some eyes, Thornberry said. Those members were able to provide countering evidence about changing Sheppard's personnel during a base tour by a BRAC commissioner and at a subsequent meeting in Washington, D.C., with BRAC staff members.

"The feedback we're getting formally and informally is that it was very informative," Thornberry said.

Among the evidence was showing how much cheaper it would be to move the initial medical training to the local base. With construction costs, for instance, Fort Sam Houston would need to spend more than \$226,000 in military construction to handle the added mission. If the medical training came to Sheppard, only \$123,000 worth of construction would be needed.

"We think there's a lot of support for it," he said of the option, though he cautioned that such positive feedback wouldn't necessarily avert job losses.

The public will get a chance to view that evidence in greater detail on Aug. 23. That's when MAC members will present their case during a public forum at the Ray Clymer Auditorium. The event begins at 5:30 p.m.

"I think the citizens would welcome the idea of learning what the community is doing," said Darrell Coleman, Times Record News publisher and MAC vice chairman. "I would encourage the public to attend the forum and learn exactly what the Military Affairs Committee has been doing to support Sheppard Air Force Base."

It's work that residents should be proud of, Thornberry said.

"When you see the mayor, county judge and members of the Military Affairs Committee, pat them on the back" he said. "They've put in a lot of work."

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Our Opinions: Overstated case

BRAC's numbers just don't seem to add up to cost savings

August 18, 2005

No question the Department of Defense had a monumental job when it put together its list of base closings and mission realignments earlier this year.

The possibilities for change boggle the mind.

One mission of the Pentagon was to make sure that any changes added value to the military, everything else being equal.

But another mission was to save money, and that was the reason most discussed by top commanders all the way down. In fact, as many as four or five years ago when a group from Wichita Falls went to a briefing with the military's top gun, he said he needed more money to pay for more gear. To him, the value of the military and the savings required were one in the same.

With the list of closings and realignments now long out and long discussed, the independent commission that is to make a final recommendation to the president and the Congress is asking a few very important questions of the Pentagon beyond whether a small medical program at Sheppard Air Force Base is moved to San Antonio.

Last week, a majority of the members of the BRAC commission said that the DoD probably overstated the nearly \$50 billion in savings projected over 20 years. The Pentagon may have missed the target by as much as 50 percent.

Eric Schmitt of The New York Times interviewed each member of BRAC about the cost savings, and "eight of the nine members expressed varying degrees of concern about the accuracy of the Pentagon figures, and said they had directed the commission staff to conduct a separate savings analysis before the commission's final votes on the military's recommendations later this month."

Anthony J. Principi, former secretary of veterans affairs and chair of the commission, had harsh words, according to Schmitt: "We're going through this effort to save money from excess capacity to modernize

forces. If the savings aren't there, and it costs money to do this on top of all the economic upheaval, why are we doing this?"

Another member of the panel, Gen. James T. Hill, told Schmitt, "I have a hard time picturing this as savings unless we're reducing the size of the force, and we're not."

The new concerns of the BRAC commissioners following similar concerns raised by the GAO, the investigative arm of Congress, were the same: that 47 percent of the projected savings were from cuts in personnel who in many cases would just go to other installations (as in the case of Sheppard Air Force Base).

It's been pointed out many times before that now is no time for a force reduction. Many contend that we have too many feet on the ground in Iraq right now. What we need is probably an increase.

Can we get this through BRAC?

It appears this is an exercise in futility.

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